



The New Mayor

Based on G.H. Broadhurst's Successful Play

THE MAN OF THE HOUR

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Chapter I—At the suburban home of Charles Wainwright, "high financier," he and his broker, Scott Gibbs, hatch up a scheme to corner Borough Street railway stock. They rely upon the support of Dick Horrigan, boss of the neighboring city, who is coming to discuss matters. Alderman Phelan, the thorn in Horrigan's side, whom Wainwright is anxious to conciliate, is also coming. Among the members of Wainwright's household are his niece and nephew, Dallas and Perry Wainwright, and his secretary, Thompson, a secretive young man in whom the financier has implicit confidence. Judge Newman, a neighbor of Wainwright, whose continuance in office depends upon Horrigan's favor, requests Wainwright's intervention with the boss. Another visitor to the Wainwrights is Alwyn Bennett, in love with Dallas, who is calling to ask her about her rumored engagement to Gibbs. Perry is in love with Cynthia Garrison, also a neighbor. II—Cynthia is the daughter of a bank president who nine years before the opening of the story was ruined by the dealings of an unnamed dishonest financier and shot himself. His son thereupon disappeared. Mrs. Bennett congratulates herself upon the immaculate record of her son's defeated father. Dallas refuses to marry Alwyn unless he does something worthy of his family and education. Phelan and Horrigan face each other. III—Phelan defies Horrigan. Judge Newman is turned down by the boss, but at Wainwright's request Horrigan becomes suspicious of Thompson, but Wainwright scoffs at the idea. Horrigan and Wainwright make a corrupt deal whereby the former, for a big consideration, is to procure from the board of aldermen a perpetual franchise for the Borough street railway. The boss is worried by the reform movement threatening his power at the coming election and is casting about for a candidate for mayor with a clean record. He hits upon Bennett, who has had some slight political experience. The latter accepts, but warns Horrigan that, if elected, he will be absolutely honest and independent.

IV—Bennett is elected and appoints Cynthia his private secretary. Phelan tells him that the financier who caused the ruin of the Garrisons was Wainwright, who is also the power behind the crooked Borough franchise bills, with Horrigan and Gibbs. Dallas and Mrs. Bennett visit the city hall.

V—Gibbs tries to induce Bennett to sign the bill. The mayor's talk with Dallas is interrupted by Horrigan.

VI—Bennett refuses to be bulldozed by Horrigan into signing the bill. The boss lacks one vote in the board of aldermen of the fourteen needed to pass the bill without the mayor's assent. Despite the fact that defeating the bill means impoverishing Dallas and Perry, whose fortune Wainwright has invested in Borough stock, Bennett vetoes the measure. VII—Bennett's plan to save Dallas and Perry is to have Perry sell Borough stock short. The mayor's opposition causes Horrigan and Wainwright to amend the bill, retaining however, some of the most objectionable features. VIII—Alwyn's love-making to Dallas at the Mayor's ball is interrupted by Horrigan. IX—Gibbs secretly plays false to Wainwright and Horrigan by buying Borough stock on his own account. Horrigan "fixes" Alderman Roberts, a wavering member of his "solid thirteen." X—Bennett warns Roberts against voting for the bill. In the presence of Cynthia, who is engaged to Perry, Phelan exposes Thompson as her brother, the long missing Harry Garrison, whereupon sister and brother embrace. Perry entering suddenly, is astonished at the sight. XI—Cynthia explains to Perry. Dallas is convinced by Wainwright that Bennett by vetoing the bill is trying to wreck her fortune. Thereupon Dallas promises to marry Gibbs. XII—Horrigan declares that if Bennett persists in his opposition to the bill he will publish indisputable proofs of granting by the mayor's father. Bennett's mother advises him to face the threatened disgrace and stick to his course. XIII—at the hearing on the bill Horrigan packs the aldermanic galleries with police to overawe the public. He bulldozes Roberts into consenting to vote for the measure, taking advantage of the alderman's financial necessities. XIV—Dallas,

coming to attend the hearing, takes a place in an anteroom. Williams, Horrigan's lieutenant, brings Roberts to the private room of the boss. XV—Bennett wins Roberts from Horrigan and in a contest of wills defeats the boss himself. Gibbs, who stands to lose all his money by the veto of the bill, is induced by Horrigan to offer to Bennett the breaking of his engagement to Dallas as the price of Bennett's ceasing to fight the bill. Perry tells Dallas of Bennett's secret measures to save her fortune.

CHAPTER XVI.

DALLAS, left alone in Horrigan's private room, sat at the big table, making no effort to follow her brother and Phelan. A messenger, searching for Horrigan, bustled in, looked inquiringly at the motionless, white faced girl, then passed on to the committee room beyond and on again in his search until the sound of his footsteps died. And still Dallas sat, inert, dumb.

Little by little she was piecing together the facts of the long miserable complication in the light of what Perry had just told her. It was absurdly easy now that she held the key of the situation. She could understand everything—how Wainwright had put her fortune into Borough stock to influence Bennett; how, failing to move the latter, he had used Alwyn's knowledge of the fact as a weapon against the young man; how Bennett had sought to save her fortune and why he had forbidden Perry to bias her feelings by telling of the generous act.

"From first to last," she murmured in unhappy contrition, "he has acted honorably and as he thought I would have wanted him to and for my happiness. And I, like the wretched little fool I was, couldn't understand and publicly humiliated him. Oh, if only it weren't too late to—"

A vision of Gibbs flashed before her mind, and she shuddered, realizing all that her rash steps had entailed. "It is too late," she confessed to herself, fighting back the hot tears that seared her eyes. "But at least I can tell him I know and beg his forgiveness and thank him."

The sound of voices in the corridor roused her from her bitter reverie. She sprang up hastily, unwilling that any should see her tear stained face, but the speakers, though they drew near, did not enter Horrigan's office. Instead, they stepped into the adjoining committee room. The messenger had left ajar the door between the two rooms. Realizing this and not wishing to be seen, Dallas shrank back toward the wall, fearful of detection. Then the voice of one of the speakers suddenly arrested her notice.

"Well," Bennett was saying, especially civil tones, "you said you had to speak to me in private. I must have you to say? Be brief, for I am busy."

Finding herself the unwilling witness to what promised to be a confidential talk, Dallas stole toward the door, intending to the corridor, but Horrigan, as was his custom, had locked it on going out. She dared not enter alone the crowded anteroom in her present state, so hesitatingly she paused, forced to remain where she was. The sound of another voice chained her to the spot, and, unconscious of eavesdropping, she stood spellbound, hearing every word distinctly through the half open doorway.

"I—I hardly know how to begin," Gibbs was replying to Bennett's curt demand. "It is a delicate subject and—"

"Then the sooner it is treated to open air the better. Is—"

"You've won the Borough bill fight," began Gibbs.

"Is that all you have to say to me?" "No. You've won, but you've lost far more. You've lost Dallas Wainwright."

"I hardly need to be reminded of that," retorted Bennett, "and it is a subject I don't care to discuss."

"But listen," pleaded Gibbs as the mayor made a move as though to leave the room. "One minute! I say you've won the Borough fight. I've won Dallas. Can't we—"

"Well, what?" asked Bennett, with ominous quiet as he paused in his departure.

"Can't we—strike some sort of bargain?" said Gibbs tentatively.

"Explain, please," ordered Bennett, with that same deceptive calm.

"Why," went on Gibbs, emboldened at the other's seeming complacency, "suppose you give up this Borough fight and I give up Dallas? I won her by a trick. She doesn't really love me. It is her pride, not her heart, that made her throw you over and accept me. It is you she loves, and I've known it all along, and you are in love with her."

"What then?"

"Just this," returned Gibbs, wondering at Bennett's quiet reception of the strange offer. "She will marry me because she isn't the sort of girl to go back on her promise, especially since she looks on me as a sort of high mind-

ed martyr to your oppression, so if I hold her to her word she will not back down. Now, if you, even now, will draw your opposition to the Borough bill will go through. Let it go through and I will break my engagement to Dallas Wainwright and leave her free to marry you."

"You promise that?"

"Yes," cried Gibbs, elated, "I promise on my word of honor! Is it a bargain?"

"Gibbs," replied Alwyn slowly, "I didn't think there was so foul a cur as you in all the world. I thought I understood how utterly rotten you were, but I didn't believe there was a man living who could debase himself as you've just done."

"But—" began Gibbs, in bewilderment.

"Now you'll listen to me for a moment," cut in Bennett, silencing the interruption. "You say I'm in love with Miss Wainwright. It is true. I love her in a way a dog like you could never understand if he tried for a lifetime. I'd give my life for one word of love from her, but I'd sooner go forever without that word than win it by a dishonest deed that would prove me unworthy of her. I asked her love as a free gift and tried to deserve it. She refused, and I won't try to buy what she won't give me, especially since the price would make me as unworthy of her as you yourself are."

"But you take the wrong view of it. You see, I—"

"I see this much: I'll have to speak plainer to get my view of the case into your vile mind. If ever again you meet me, stand out of my way. Don't speak to me or come where I am, for



The eavesdropper.

If you cross my path again I'll treat you ten thousand times worse than when I thrashed you in that football game. That's all."

Bennett, restraining his wrath with a mighty effort, turned on his heel and strode off into the corridor, leaving Gibbs staring after him in dumb, impotent despair.

When the broker had recovered himself sufficiently to start from the room, Dallas Wainwright stood before him, barring the exit. Her face was dead white, her big dark eyes ablaze.

"Wait!" she commanded. "I must speak to you—for the last time."

"Dallas!" gasped the desperate man, his drawn face turning positively yellow. "You were—you—"

"Mr. Bennett just now called you 'the foulest cur in all the world,'" said Dallas, her voice scarcely louder than a whisper, yet every syllable stinging as a whiplash. "He put it too mildly."

"But, sweetheart—"

"Miss Wainwright, please. I heard you offer to sell me to him in exchange for his conscience. If my own brother had told me such a thing I would not have believed him, but I myself heard it. And I heard his splendid answer."

"But, you know, I was joking! That it was just a trick to—"

"Just such a trick that made me promise to be your wife? Yes, but this time you had to do with a man—a man in a million—not with a poor, credulous little idiot like me. And he answered you as I should have answered you had my eyes been open—"

in time. I—"

"Dallas," groaned Gibbs, "of heaven's sake don't look at me like that! I can't bear it! I love you. And I—"

"And I in my criminal folly promised to marry you!" she stormed. "I let you kiss me. My lips are degraded forever by that touch of yours. I let you speak words of love to me. I broke a brave man's heart for your worthless sake. Oh, the shame—the horrible shame of it all! But I shall thank God on my bended knees that I have found out the truth before it was too late."

"Too late?" he echoed in horror, his voice rising almost to a scream. "Dallas, you're not going to throw me over? You aren't?"

"Scott Gibbs," she answered quietly, a world of wondering scorn in her level tones, "you do not even know how vile a thing you are. Now leave me, please. Your presence sickens me."

He tried to speak, but something of the ineffable contempt in her steady eyes silenced him. Without a word he slunk out of the room and out of her life.

Phelan, agitated with eagerness for the coming struggle in the aldermanic chamber, bustled past through the corridor. The alderman had many duties today, and as the performance of each brought him nearer to his longed for revenge on Horrigan he was positively beaming with righteous bliss. Dallas caught sight of him.

"Alderman!" she called faintly.

Phelan halted, still in haste to fulfill his mission.

"Could—could I see Mr. Bennett?" she asked, a new timidity transforming her rich voice. "Do you know where I can find him?"

"Is it important? He's pretty busy."

"Very important!" she pleaded. "I must see him at once."

"I'll look him up," agreed Phelan, "but I warn you he's too busy to see you just yet. Suppose you let me take you back to the meeting? Our bill's coming up in a few minutes now, and you don't want to miss it. Then I'll scare up his honor for you as soon as he's got a spare minute and bring you back here to him. Sorry to keep you waiting."

He went on as they started toward the council chamber, "but before this session's over all sorts of things is due to explode, and we ain't hardly at the beginning of the excitement yet. We're goin' to make a Fourth of July celebration in a giant powder factory look like a deaf mute funeral by the time we're done."

CHAPTER XVII.

"HIS in there!" observed Phelan in high excitement, jerking his thumb toward a door leading off the committee room, "and I've sent for Wainwright an' Horrigan to meet your honor here. An' I've fixed it so the Borough bill won't come up for ten minutes. Now, all that's left is to touch the punk to the fuse an' set off the whole giddy bunch of fireworks under 'em. Gee, but it's good to 'a' stuck to this old world just for the sake of bein' here today an' seein' what I'm due to see!"

The alderman chuckled, but his joyous anticipation found no reflection in Bennett's white set face. The two were in the committee room, whither Phelan had repaired after depositing Dallas in a chair beside her brother at the meeting and attending to one or two details of greater import.

"Yes," went on Phelan, again nodding mysteriously toward the farther door, "he's in there, trained to the minute, for the blowout. There's some one else wants to see you, too—some one who'll make more of a hit with you if I'm not overplayin' my hand. But good news can wait. There's so little of it in this measly life that it generally has to. I—"

From the corridor Horrigan stamped into the committee room, Wainwright at his heels.

"Well!" cried the boss defiantly, glaring at Bennett and ignoring Phelan. "You sent for us. What do you want?"

"One moment!" intervened Wainwright. "We are beaten. We admit that without argument. So we need waste no time going over details."

"Have you sent for us to say what you'll sell out for?" queried Horrigan coarsely, "because if you have you've only to name your price. You've got us where you want us. We've got to pay."

"I should have thought," replied Bennett, with no shade of offense, "you would know by this time that I have no price."

"Then what do you want?"

"Nothing—from you."

"Why did you send word you wanted to see us?" growled Horrigan impatiently as he and Wainwright, uninvited, seated themselves at the table.

"To tell you," answered Alwyn, glancing from one to the other, "that every step you two have taken in this whole infamous transaction from the very first has been carefully followed, and, to use your own phrase, we've got you with the goods!"

"Same old bluff!" commented Horrigan contemptuously, with a reassuring wink at the somewhat less confident Wainwright.

"By tomorrow noon," resumed Bennett, "you will both be in bedder on a

FINANCIAL

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charge of bribery. Even now there are detectives on the watch for you. Escape is impossible."

"Rot!" sneered Horrigan. "You've no evidence that will indict, and you know it. Even if you had, don't I control most of the judges and the district attorney's office besides? Swell chance you'll have of getting a conviction past that bunch! Bah! You talk like a man made of mud. I s'pose it's the affair of those Roberts notes you're counting on. That don't feaze me any. My lawyer can twist that around so it'll look like a charity gift. No, no, youngster. You'll have to think of something better if—"

"And, anyhow," put in Wainwright nervously, "you can't prove any connection on my part. There's nothing against me or—"

"I think there is," retorted Bennett, wheeling about on the financier. "And even if I can't nail the Roberts bribery to you I've plenty more counts to hold you on."

"All these generalities and vague accusations prove nothing, Bennett," answered Wainwright, drawing courage from Horrigan's colossal calm and speaking with more assurance. "Mr. Horrigan and I are not schoolboys to be scared by baseless threats. This is all guesswork on your part. Come, now, name one specific charge you can prove."

"One will be enough to convince you?" asked Alwyn. "Well, then, how about this as a first guess? Mr. Horrigan's bribe of \$2,000,000 in money and 25,000 shares of Borough stock for agreeing to put through the Borough franchise? For 'guesswork' that doesn't seem to me very bad."

Wainwright's hard mask of a face twitched convulsively, but the steady brain that had carried him unshaken through a thousand risky financial deals came at once to his rescue.

"An excellent guess," he agreed in splendidly feigned amusement, "but unfortunately the courts demand proof before convicting a man, and there is no proof whatever of—"

"Are you sure?" queried Bennett. Turning to Phelan, he added:

"Please ask Mr. Thompson to come in."

The alderman, with an expansive grin, flung open the door of the farther room.

(To be concluded next week.)

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